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Here's a somewhat recent article on the Pasco contamination issue and Mr. Reisinger



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Pasco man says bad well behind family illnesses

This story was published Wednesday, January 31st, 2007

By Joe Chapman, Herald staff writer

In the old days, Kenneth Reisinger didn't think anything of grabbing a drink from his hose on a hot Mid-Columbia summer day.

Now the 72-year-old sees the water as a toxin that's hurt him, his daughter, his grandchildren and his dog.

Reisinger lives on about 10 acres off A Street, about two miles south of the old Pasco landfill. A well has supplied the house since the family built it there more than 50 years ago.

But that water was contaminated from years of industrial waste, including chemical drums, that were put into the landfill without proper containment. The landfill was a dumping ground for the entire Northwest.

More than 40 businesses and people were implicated in the contamination. Some of the parties reached agreements to absolve them of further liability. The city of Pasco, for instance, agreed to prohibit further well drilling in the affected area. The city never owned the landfill but dumped refuse in one section of it.

A remaining group of responsible parties, predominantly businesses, has cleaned the area, monitored it and supplied data to the state Ecology Department.

Five years ago, the group spent about \$10 million to cart off chemical wastes and contaminated soil and cover deposit areas. Through 50 monitoring wells, the parties have collected data to see if caps placed over the landfill slowed the flow of toxins.

The group now is finalizing a report on the data. Based on the report, the Ecology Department will determine this spring whether treatment systems at the landfill have been effective or whether additional action is needed.

The ground water is contaminated with vinyl chloride, a known carcinogen, said Rick Dawson, a supervisor in the Land Use, Sewage and Water section of the Benton-Franklin Health District.

While the chemical solvent levels don't exceed federal safe drinking water standards, they do exceed cleanup standards, he said.

The contamination plume is known to affect the wells of six nearby residents but hasn't reached nearby irrigation wells or

posed a threat to any crops, said David George, a site manager for the Ecology Department in Spokane.

The group of responsible parties has paid to hook up five of the residents to the city's water system and is paying for their service, but Reisinger is holding out.

"I refuse to do it because they're just trying to cover everything up and get away with something," said Reisinger, a self-described cynic.

The cleanup group previously provided him bottled water, but he said he canceled that arrangement after his dogs knocked the bottles over and the water damaged his floor.

The parties then provided carbon filters for his well. He became more suspicious when the group recalled the filters because they didn't work.

So Reisinger continues to drink the water, at his age not holding on to the goal of perfect health. His chocolate Labrador, Muffin, drinks it, too. It still tastes good, he said.

But Reisinger keeps the water from his daughter and her children when they come over. His daughter, Mai-Lee Morris, 26, grew up drinking it and playing in it. Now she has been researching vinyl chloride on the Internet, fearful that health symptoms she suffers are linked to it.

She thinks her father should accept the hookup to the city's water system.

"I do. But he knows how I feel about that," she said.

Reisinger said he doesn't have enough money to go to court, and he doesn't trust attorneys anyway. He would like the city to buy his land from him and cap the well so he can move to Idaho, but the city didn't go for his price of \$500,000.

In recent years, he has watched city development encroach on his land. On many days, he finds himself lying in bed, looking out his window to the west to see who's getting onto his property.

Eventually, the ground water below Reisinger's property will be restored, George said. But how long it will take remains a question. The forthcoming evaluation process will help determine that, he said.

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